

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education

PROVINCE TO DOUBLE TRAINING SEATS FOR PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

VANCOUVER – The number of physiotherapists educated in British Columbia will double as a result of new provincial funding for the University of British Columbia's physical therapy training program, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced today.

"With our province's population both growing and aging, this government is focusing on expanding post-secondary programs to educate the health-care experts our province needs to lead the way in healthy living, physical fitness and supporting people with special needs," Coell said.

"We've already doubled the number of new medical students. We've almost doubled the number of education spaces for student nurses. Now we're doubling the number of physical therapy seats at UBC to meet the growing need for physiotherapists around B.C."

UBC offers the province's only physical therapy program, which graduates 40 physiotherapists a year. The two-year master's degree program will accept 16 extra first-year students this fall, another 16 in fall 2009, and eight more in fall 2010. By spring 2011, the program will be able to graduate 80 physiotherapists a year.

Government is also providing \$7.1 million to help UBC create a state-of-the-art home for the program as part of the \$120-million UBC Renew partnership. The program will move to the renovated Friedman Building this fall. The Province has also provided UBC with a one-time grant of \$125,000 for new equipment for the physical therapy program.

"The support from the government of B.C. to double the enrolment of the physical therapy program at UBC, and to enhance our research capacity in exercise interventions and exercise fitness programs for people living in the community, is an important step forward in ensuring we continue to address the health needs of British Columbians," said Dr. Gavin Stuart, dean of the UBC faculty of medicine.

Physiotherapists serve a wide variety of patients. Among their areas of practice are helping people regain mobility after injury or surgery, teaching the elderly to use equipment that makes them more independent, working with children who have birth defects like cerebral palsy, treating people with asthma and other respiratory conditions, and teaching sports to people with disabilities.

"Physiotherapists are a critical component of the health-care team in preventing, treating and managing movement disorders that can result from various conditions and disorders," Health Minister George Abbott said. "We are working across the range of health-care professions to recruit, retain and educate sufficient health professionals – including physiotherapists, doctors and nurses – so we continue to deliver sustainable and high-quality health care for years to come."

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Last week, 195 doctors graduated from UBC's expanded school of medicine, up from 128 the previous year. Since 2001, when government began adding new nursing programs and more student spaces, nurses have graduated with almost 13,000 degrees, diplomas and certificates. The number of post-secondary spaces for student nurses is up by 3,786 – an increase of 93 per cent since 2001.

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Media Linda O'Connor
contact: Communications Manager
 250 952-6400
 250 812-4418 (cell)

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